Louisiana Forest Health Highlights 2018

The Resource

Louisiana's forests cover 13.8 million acres, nearly half of the state's land area. The majority of the state's forested land, some 10 million acres, is in non-industrial private ownership, while approximately 603,500 acres are in national forests. Louisiana's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat throughout the state. Major forest types in Louisiana include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress. Other minor types account for approximately 3% of the forest.

Forest Influences and Programs

Southern pine beetle (SPB) is Louisiana's most significant forest insect pest. However, SPB activity in the state has been insignificant in recent years, a trend that has lasted for about 19 years. Beginning in September of 2017, SPB is showing an increase in activity in the Feliciana's. In 2018, we've recorded 23 SPB spots and are currently ground checking for confirmation, informing landowners, and continuing to monitor. None of these spots have created major problems as most of them have been cut out. We've, in coordination with the USFS, been proactive and have held 2 landowner meetings across the state to inform landowners of this serious pest. We've also held a training for our foresters and pilots as a refresher course.

Pine engraver beetles (Ips spp.) and black turpentine beetle remain at relatively normal levels. Because Ips infestations tend to be relatively small and scattered, they usually cannot be effectively controlled or salvaged, but their economic costs may exceed those caused by SPB. We've recorded 57 Ips infestations in 2018.

Forest tent caterpillar caused defoliation this spring on about 338,773 acres of tupelo gum wetlands in South Louisiana. Much of the defoliated area was also affected by defoliation due to baldcypress leafroller (see Figure 1).

Baldcypress leafroller also caused defoliation on about 337,893 acres of mixed baldcypress stands in southeastern Parishes, mostly associated with forest tent caterpillar defoliated areas.

Gypsy Moth survey was conducted using 181 traps across the state and no gypsy moths were captured.

Emerald Ash borer was first confirmed in Webster Parish in February of 2015. It has since been confirmed in Bossier, Claiborne, Union, Lincoln, Bienville, Jackson, Morehouse, Ouachita, and Caddo Parishes. Caddo Parish was added this year. We have continued to inform landowners of this pest and have distributed information through press releases and handouts. We continue to coordinate with other agencies to monitor and implement our EAB response plan.

Laurel Wilt Disease and the Redbay Ambrosia Beetle made its introduction into Union Parish, Louisiana in September 2014. The beetle has also been confirmed in Claiborne, Lincoln, Vernon, Beauregard, Natchitoches, Winn, and Ouachita Parishes. Natchitoches, Winn, and Ouachita were added this year. Our foresters continue to observe for declining sassafras and redbay trees caused by laurel wilt.

Cogongrass is a serious invasive species occurring primarily in southeast Louisiana. LDAF has implemented a new Cogongrass Treatment Program this past year. Over the past year, we've documented 368 infestations for 71 acres and have enrolled 111 of those for 26 acres. We, along with the LSU Ag Center, have put on 2 landowner meetings to help spread the word about cogongrass and the new treatment program we have implemented.

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
Office of Forestry
5825 Florida Blvd., Suite 6000
Baton Rouge, LA 70806
225-925-4500
mcutrer@ldaf.state.la.us
Louisiana Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry